

REMARKS

Status of the Claims

Claims 1-16 are pending in the present application. Claims 17-21 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein.

Rejection of Claims 1-21 Under 35 U.S.C. 112, Second Paragraph

Claims 1-21 are rejected by the Examiner under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, for the reasons set forth in paragraph 2 of the Office Action. This rejection is respectfully traversed. Reconsideration and withdrawal thereof are requested.

The independent claim has been amended to recite that the rubber hardness is measured according to JIS K6253. Applicants respectfully submit that this is a clarifying, non-narrowing claim amendment. As a result of the amendments to claim 1, the rejection under the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, for the reasons set forth in paragraph 2 of the Office Action should be withdrawn by the Examiner.

Rejection of Claim 17 Under 35 U.S.C. 102(a) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 6,471,628 to Hirayama

Claim 17 is rejected by the Examiner under 35 U.S.C. 102(a) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 6,471,628 to Hirayama. This rejection is moot in view of the cancellation of claim 17.

Rejection of Claims 18-20 Under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over U.S. Patent 6,471,628

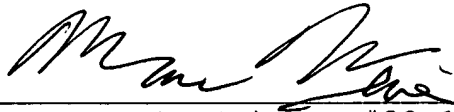
Claims 18-20 are rejected by the Examiner under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over U.S. Patent 6,471,628. This rejection is moot in view of the cancellation of claims 18-20.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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By



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